

Feminist Accused of Difference from the Self

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Abstract

In this article, I read Cynthia G. Franklin's (2009) discussion of Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, arguing that Franklin's criticism is rooted in disavowed identification. Next, I explore Gallop's memoir as generating such strong reactions as Franklin's because it describes the intense and originating conflict of separating from one's mother to develop a mind of one's own. I conclude by analysing my own identifications with Gallop and her text.

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Résumé

Dans cet article, j'examine la discussion par Cynthia G. Franklin (2009) de l'ouvrage *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (1997) de Jane Gallop, en affirmant que la critique de Franklin est enracinée dans une identification désavouée. Ensuite, j'explore l'idée que le mémoire de Gallop génère des réactions aussi vives que celles de Franklin parce qu'elle décrit le conflit intense et initial de la séparation d'avec la mère pour développer sa propre individualité. Je conclus en analysant mes propres identifications avec Gallop et son texte.

Introduction

A woman's intellectual and academic work bears a complex emotional history. The infantile separation of one's body and mind from that of the mother is at the origin of one's capacity to think, learn, and create something in and of the world (Kristeva 2001; Pitt 2006). The development of subjectivity—of an individual self—thus depends on an unbearable and destructive loss: the loss of the infantile belief that one's self and one's mother are the same (Harrison 2013). Alice Pitt and Chloë Brushwood Rose (2007) argue that attending to the psychical processes that structure one's capacity to think and learn will help to free up those capacities and, concurrently, that analysing the blocks, strange eruptions, and difficulties of one's intellectual life can help elucidate the vicissitudes of the inner world. They call this the work of making emotional significance and argue that such work is crucial for those who wish to make for themselves a life of the mind. In this article I explore the emotional significance of the mother's difference for feminist women academics.

A life of the mind can feel at once welcoming and alienating for women scholars who may experience the academy as a site of simultaneous belonging and estrangement. Nancy K. Miller (1997) evokes this ambivalence with her questions: "Can a woman, more precisely, *how* can a woman be at home in the university? Or can't she?" (983). Susanne Luhmann (2004) argues that generational conflict is a factor in what constitutes at-home-ness for feminist scholars. Because the future directions of Women's and Gender Studies, for instance, will not necessarily align with the history of the field—its past directions—what feels homely for a given scholar will likely shift with her generational identifications. Generational conflict implicates the dilemma of the mother's difference. Luhmann contends that the mothers of institutionalized Women's and Gender Studies often experience its future as a loss if it doesn't align with the past priorities and paradigms that those mothers set in place. Through the inevitability of generational

conflict—inevitable because it is a condition of our very subjectivity and capacity to think—the mothers of the field may no longer feel at home in the very home that their labour built.

Clare Hemmings (2011) highlights how generational conflict informs the structure of scholarly feminist narratives, conversations, and debates. She notices that Western feminist theory tends to proceed along particular discursive lines: progress and loss narratives dominate the field. Generational conflict haunts these narrative structures: progress narratives tend to be employed by junior feminist scholars who imagine that Women's and Gender Studies is steadily ridding itself of the exclusions that have marked its history. Hemmings argues that theorists who deploy progress narratives cannot notice the debt that they owe to the founding mothers of feminist theory and Women's Studies. In wishing to represent Women's and Gender Studies as increasingly inclusive, progress narratives can exclude the important contributions of the intellectual mothers of the field. Loss narratives, on the other hand, operate through a reversal of this kind of discursive aggression. More senior theorists who tend to draw on these narratives imagine a loss of intellectual rigour in the field as well as of political action. These theorists appear resistant to change in the academic terrain of feminist theory and resentful that junior scholars take their work in new and unanticipated directions. These narrative structures, which organize the field, both effect and reflect conflict; conflicts within feminist theorizing can feel so intolerable because they recall an intolerable condition of subjectivity and language: the original confrontation with the mother's otherness.

To grapple with how generational conflict emerges in feminist narrative and what kinds of emotional significance one might make of it, I undertake a close reading of a memoir by an academic feminist, one who positions herself as both a daughter and a mother of Women's Studies in the United States. A story about generational conflict and its effect on women's at-homeness in the university, Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* brings into sharp relief the emotional significance of the dilemma the mother's otherness poses for the feminist academic woman. I begin with Cynthia G. Franklin's (2009) reading of Gallop's memoir, asking what is at stake for Franklin in *Feminist Accused*. In the next section, I offer my own in-

terpretations of *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*. I read it as a tale describing academic women's defenses against the condition of loss that enables thinking. Gallop's memoir chronicles the thinking woman's need to navigate the problematic reality that she is not of one body, mind, and self with her intellectual mothers. In section three, I turn my focus to my own ambivalent identifications vis-à-vis this memoir, noting the ways in which my reading repeats both daughterly violence on Gallop and motherly violence on the graduate students who populate the text. I risk exposing the tangle of my defenses and identifications in order to think in new ways about how ambivalence structures academic life for women.

Memoir and the Crisis in Authority

In her book *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today*, Cynthia G. Franklin (2009) argues that academic memoirs, proliferating rapidly since the 1990s, offer us a vantage through which to consider the problems, issues, and intellectual trends that higher education faces in the context of the increasingly neo-liberal university. In particular, Franklin is interested in debates surrounding and shaping the status of the humanities, contending that "academic memoirs serve as a barometer for the state of the humanities during a period of crisis" (2). She also notes the way in which the genre of memoir offers established academics (to whom she refers as participating in the "academic star system" [see, for example, 1]) a complex opportunity to comment on their academic and institutional environments: academic memoirs, frequently published by prestigious university presses, often offer critiques of the university, but they do so from the author's secure and privileged location as tenured "stars" within the academy. Franklin highlights the way in which the memoir genre softens the blow of academic memoirists' critiques not only because of their ironic position vis-à-vis the academy—they critique the very institutions which support their capacity to offer critique—but also because the genre itself is structured around a logic of individualism and, as such, allows writers to present their views as personal while also, paradoxically, overlooking the "ways reigning theories can be fueled by personal investments" (26). Franklin is interested in "the complex story that accounts of individual professors' lives have to tell about the current

cultural and political climate in the academy” and regards memoirs as “offering spaces that are more mus-ing and pliable than those afforded by theory [allowing authors to] display contradictions between the personal and political without having to reconcile them” (1-2, 2). Yet Franklin is also wary of the individualism of “the monological genre of ‘me-moir’” because it can obscure the power and privilege inherent to the academic memoirist’s professional position (158).

Even for scholars committed “in their other work...[to] a progressive politics and structural analyses of power,” memoir can offer tenured academics a space in which to posit themselves an exceptional individual and thus, Franklin (2009) argues, to overlook their own locatedness within matrices of power and politics (4). Franklin articulates this complexity: “I am especially interested in how memoir both depends on institutional privilege and can render it invisible” (23). Franklin identifies this function of memoir as specific to the “memoir boom” of the 1990s (see Miller 1997; Gilmore 2001), arguing that the memoir writing coming from the academy in the 1970s and 1980s functioned as a demand for recognition of the ways in which the personal is, precisely, political (Franklin 2009). In those decades, academic memoirs tended to be “by those challenging or at the margins of the academy (i.e., Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Davis, and Cherrie Moraga)” (4). 1990s memoirs, on the other hand, tend to be written by academics “around the age of fifty, after they became full professors and established a national reputation” (4). Franklin’s characterization of the landscape of academic memoirs in the 1990s relative to those from the 1970s or 1980s evokes the problem of generational conflict: how can one acknowledge one’s indebtedness while also creating something that differs from—and perhaps appropriates, alters, or even ruins—those objects to which one is indebted? And, how does generation affect one’s relative power in the world? The intellectual labour of the women of colour memoirists whom Franklin cites above includes carving out an academic place for personal narrative by using it to expose complex workings of power and privilege in everyday life. Built on the back of this important work, Franklin argues, memoirs that come later destroy, or at the very least render invisible, the important links between the personal and the political that those early memoirists’ labour helped to forge. Franklin’s analysis raises the question not only of how

generation informs the “academic star system,” but also how that system—which both influences and is influenced by who gets canonized as the fathers and mothers of a given field of thought—is structured by race, class, power, and privilege.

Writing of academic memoirs written since the 1990s, Franklin (2009) asks: “Must a focus on the individual happen at the expense of larger, potentially revolutionary, social and political identities and concerns that challenged the academy in the 1980s?” (6). This echoes a question that fuels feminist scholars’ debates about the dilution of a politically feminist agenda that may or may not accompany feminist theory’s institutionalization in the academy. For instance, just as Franklin argues that academics who regard themselves as politically progressive have, in their memoir writing from the 1990s on, traded their social situatedness for a radical individualism, M. Jacqui Alexander (2005) argues that “subordinated knowledges within the academy have traded radicalism for institutionalization” (5-6).

Franklin’s (2009) focus on the state of the humanities includes the field of Women’s and Gender Studies—one such home for the “subordinated knowledges” to which Alexander refers. Franklin points out that the contemporary humanities are influenced by theories innovated and/or foregrounded by the labour of Women’s and Gender Studies such as the multiplicity of the subject and shifts in our understanding of the human condition in light of the insights generated by “identity politics, postcolonial studies, feminism, and disability studies” (4). As such, Franklin’s discussion of memoir and its capacity to provide unique insight into tensions and issues in the university joins a conversation which precedes *Academic Lives*: the question, which resonates in Alexander’s critique, of what happens when we institutionalize feminism. Robyn Wiegman (2012) characterizes the fraught history of these debates surrounding the institutionalization of feminism and the formation of the field now known as Women’s and Gender Studies as structured by the narrative possibilities that Hemmings (2011) identifies: institutionalization gets represented variously as progress or as loss. Yet, Wiegman invites those scholars invested in feminist theory to risk acknowledging and embracing the ambivalence which, she argues, constitutes the field: the institutionalization of feminist theory and the field of Women’s and Gen-

der studies must always involve both progress *and* loss. How might bearing (with) this ambivalence affect the stories one can tell—about feminism; about Women's and Gender Studies; about oneself; about another feminist's text?

One memoir Franklin (2009) focuses on is Jane Gallop's (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*. Franklin reads the memoir as symptomatic of Gallop's inability to recognize her culpability in the ways in which she, individually, has benefitted from the problem of political dilution that attends feminism's institutionalization. Franklin (2009) "[argues] that prominent feminists write pedagogy memoirs to negotiate the anxieties that attend the institutionalization of feminism, particularly as it is accompanied by the academic star system, the underfunding of the university, and the devaluation of the humanities" (26). Gallop is one of these "prominent feminists" to whom Franklin refers. "As Gallop attempts through her feminist pedagogy to transgress—but reinstates—institutional roles and rules," writes Franklin, "she suggests the difficulties for feminists of maintaining an oppositional politics when feminism has achieved institutional power" (26). Franklin's worry about Gallop's position as an 'institutional(ized) feminist' points to a problem which we might understand as the paradox of feminist pedagogy. What becomes of Gallop's "oppositional" feminism when she suddenly finds herself, as feminist pedagogue, a figure of authority in the classroom? Luhmann (2012) argues that the problem is not with feminist pedagogy per se, but rather with a conception of learning as linear, transparent, and knowable. What fuels the paradox of feminist pedagogy, she asserts, is a common wish that the feminist desire driving an educator's teaching will simply translate directly into the student's feminist learning. Yet, human difference and subjectivity—the emotional significance of an individual's inner world—will always interrupt this simple translation. Feminist pedagogues might have particular desires regarding what they would like to teach their students, yet the students' otherness makes teachers powerless to control what it is they actually learn. Franklin (2009) argues that in the face of this powerlessness, the academic memoirs of "prominent feminists" serve to reify—and to remind us of—their authority.

In its basic form (*Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* does not present a straightforward, linear

telling of the "facts"), the scandal that Gallop's (1997) memoir describes goes like this: in April 1991, at a party held in a lesbian bar following a busy and stimulating day at the First Annual Graduate Student Gay and Lesbian Conference held at the university where she is tenured, Gallop publicly kissed good-bye a woman student at the party. The student, an advisee of Gallop, was to present a paper about Gallop's writing and the erotics of their pedagogical relationship at the conference the next day. While it had become the habit of Gallop and her advisee to kiss good-bye after their meetings, for the first time this public kiss was of a more passionate variety: "the usual good-bye peck suddenly became a real kiss" (91). According to Gallop and her report of witnesses' accounts, the kiss between the two women was consensual and enjoyed by both parties. Gallop's physical relationship with the student did not exceed the kiss. Sometime between this public kiss in April 1991 and November 1992, Gallop and her advisee ceased working together and speaking to one another after Gallop found some of the student's work unsatisfactory. In November 1992, this student and one other woman student filed a university "Complaint of Discrimination" against Gallop, charging her with sexual harassment (77). Both students charged Gallop with quid pro quo sexual harassment, claiming that she had tried to initiate sex with each of them (which Gallop denies) and that, when they refused, she began "rejecting" their work (94). In their complaints, both students sought four remedies from the university. They requested that Gallop "be reprimanded,...that [she] be kept out of any decisions regarding their work,...that the department create a mechanism to deal with sexual harassment," and that she "understand that making the complaint the subject of intellectual inquiry constitutes retaliation" (77, 78). Although the complaints, while open, were meant to remain confidential, the students organized their colleagues to vocally oppose Gallop's involvement in a conference she organized in the spring of 1993 and they handed out flyers detailing the case. In the end, Gallop was found not guilty of sexual harassment although, in the case of the student whom she had kissed, she was found in contravention of the university's policy against "consensual amorous relations" between professor and student (57). In 1994, the story of students accusing Gallop of sexual harassment and Gallop's perspective on the case was the cover

story of the popular academic magazine *Lingua Franca* (Franklin 2009). The case rapidly rose to notoriety; its sensationalism both drew on and contributed to what Franklin describes as Gallop's rising "star" status in the academy. The scandal was—and is—the object of much inquiry and debate (see, for example, Talbot 1994; Malcolm 1997; Showalter 1997; Kaplan 1998; Patai 1998; Cavanagh 2007; Miller 2011). The prestigious Duke University Press published *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* in 1997.

For Franklin (2009), *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* is symptomatic not only of Gallop's pedagogical anxiety in the face of feminism's institutionalization, but also of her "crisis in authority" (see, for example, 144). Franklin locates this crisis as specific to the late 1980s and the 1990s, a time when theoretical trends in the humanities demanded of academics—particularly of white men—that they examine their "formerly unmarked positions of privilege," a demand arising directly from, among other intellectual locations, the memoir writing of feminists of colour, mentioned above (144). But, Franklin argues, this crisis in authority has also to do with the contemporary and popular degradation of the status of and resources for the humanities in the university and in the public imaginary alike. For Franklin, then, Gallop's memoir is the work of a privileged, if anxious, academic who holds all of the relative power in this case—including the support of the university, despite how she rhetorically positions the institution as working against her. The memoir functions to divest the students of power, control, and authority, both academic and feminist, and to "shore up her authority in the name of feminism" (146). And, according to Franklin, it is relevant that Gallop uses the memoir genre in order to tell this story because it allows her to elide the kind of theoretical rigour which would certainly bring Gallop's power play to an unflattering light.

Franklin (2009) argues that, in the course of Gallop's effort to secure her own authority, the "student is diminished to the status of prop" through Gallop's telling about their difficult encounter (157). Moreover, for Franklin, this is a part of Gallop's larger problem in that she positions her students generally "as passive recipients" of her feminist pedagogy—including the ways in which she eroticizes her classroom (157). But in suggesting that this aspect of Gallop's pedagogy is extended to the case under scrutiny—that her students were

passive recipients of her attentions, both in the form of her flirtation and her criticism—Franklin positions the student accusers merely as passive victims¹, overlooking the powerful threat that they represent for Gallop in their structural relation to her. Herself Gallop's junior—she writes about being in graduate school during the scandal and of hearing Gallop speak right around that time—Franklin also overlooks her own capacity to pose a threat. In an earlier text about the history of feminism's institutionalization in the academy, Gallop (1992) offers a strategy for thinking about the vehemence of our revulsion to certain texts and narratives such as that which characterizes Franklin's condemnation of *Feminist Accused*. We must try, argues Gallop, "to recognize the intensity of [our] negativity as a symptom of disavowed identification" (9).

The intensity of Franklin's response to Gallop's memoir carries the trace of maternal loss at the origin of her thinking subjectivity, a conflict that gave rise to the pleasures and dangers of language and selfhood. Through the lens of generational conflict, it is perhaps easier to notice Franklin's identifications with Gallop's students: Franklin positions herself, analytically, "against" Gallop and she demonstrates Gallop's relative authority by telling the reader that she needed to solicit Gallop's permission to quote her comments from an online forum in *Academic Lives*, for instance (Gallop granted the permission). But we should also consider Franklin's identifications *with* Gallop. After all, like Gallop, here is Franklin writing a book. Now that she has written a book, what will become of her? If her book is contingent on the destruction of Gallop, for instance, then a part of her aggression speaks to her *own* anxiety and crisis of authority: for who might be waiting to destroy Franklin?

The complexity of Franklin's identifications vis-à-vis *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* speaks to another way to understand how it articulates a crisis of authority. For Franklin, what is at stake in Gallop's crisis of authority is her status as a professor, pedagogue, and feminist and the memoir genre serves her purposes in this crisis by allowing her to overlook her structural position within matrices of power and powerlessness: it renders her radically individualized. But I want to think about what is at stake in the crisis in authority that attends feminism's institutionalization a little differently. Although her story is of her individual experience, Gal-

lop's memoir elaborates a psychical crisis that structures women's academic lives.

The "Terrorist Graduate Student" and the Problem of the Mother's Otherness

In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, Gallop (1997) tells the story of a scandal in which she found herself ensnared. Although Franklin (2009) is suspicious of the trickiness of the time of the narrative in *Feminist Accused*, the uneven time of Gallop's telling of the scandal contributes to the tangle of identifications the reader encounters. In the memoir, Gallop plays out a drama that evokes an uncanny familiarity for women engaged in the labour of conceiving and delivering ideas in language. As such, through its tricks of time and its confusion of identifications, the scandal she describes arouses one's deep affective relations to the academic life, leaving no reader untouched. This explains the fascination with the scandal and the impulse that many readers feel, to varying degrees, to condemn those involved, either Gallop or the graduate student accusers, or both. Thinking about the way *Feminist Accused* evokes complex identifications highlights its emotional significance and, importantly, invites us all as readers to risk locating and implicating ourselves in the attraction or revulsion (or both) we feel in relation to Gallop's narrative.

In *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, Gallop's side of the story is that of the mother who has had to survive her own destruction at the hands of her daughters, a destruction—and survival—upon which the daughters' capacity to understand themselves as women scholars at the university is contingent. The case that the memoir describes has captured the imagination of the academic community, and particularly of the humanities, for years not only because of its sensationalist structure—sex!; student-teacher sex!; intergenerational sex!; lesbian sex!—but also because it unfolds along the lines of a painfully personal scene of loss, that of encountering the mother's otherness. Confronting and enduring the mother's otherness is a conflict which structures every subject's capacity to become an independent thinker; yet, for women-identified subjects, the conflict of the mother's otherness poses at once a great intellectual burden and a fertile creative drive (Harrison 2013).

Gallop (1997) positions herself, in no uncertain terms, as one of the mothers of Women's Studies,

a burgeoning discipline in the university beginning in the 1970s:

At the time, women's studies was not yet a formal program; a steering committee was set up to conceive its shape before we applied for official university status. The decision was made, on principle, to include students on what would more traditionally have been a faculty committee. As an undergraduate, I got to serve on the committee, and I felt privileged to be allowed to join the faculty in building women's studies. The inclusive composition of this committee betokened our vision of women's studies as different from the rest of the university: knowledge would be more egalitarian and more alive. (17)

Though a student at the time, occupying what might be thought of as a daughterly role, Gallop is invited to help "conceive" Women's Studies. She is there at its conception and at its birth in the university. In the conception of Women's Studies as Gallop describes it here resides a fantasy that marks women's intellectual work: the fantasy that knowledge (women's knowledge, knowledge about women) could be "more alive"; that the labour of thinking, reading, and writing need not be haunted by the spectral mothers upon whose destruction such work is contingent. Ann Braithwaite et al. (2004) describe this haunting with the trope of "passing-on" (see, for example, 12): for them, learning is both a series of gifts and of losses. Junior scholars owe a debt to senior scholars who pass on the legacy of their labour. But "passing-on," in its reference to death and dying, also names the violence and sorrow of loss and separation upon which junior scholars' work is contingent. Thus, the fantasy of knowledge that could be "more alive" is doomed to falter and Gallop herself becomes one casualty of generational conflict and this dilemma of "passing-on." And, in the tangle of identifications, aggression, and desire that originate in the first, infantile need to separate from the mother, Gallop also leaves casualties in her wake.

As one of the mothers of contemporary and institutionalized Women's and Gender Studies, Gallop has certain intellectual and political hopes for the field; in *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* she details her disappointment that sexual harassment, a concept fleshed out by feminist intellectuals, has been coopted in ways beyond her control, including by her students who use the concept to denounce her and what she regards as her feminist pedagogical practices. The memoir is so captivating because it tells the familiar story

of a woman whose maternal hopes and expectations are violently dashed. The objects and subjective and symbolic positions which Gallop has helped to make possible in the world through her conception and her labour—contemporary and academic feminism, feminist theory and discourse, feminist women graduate students—turn against her in the scandal. In “Talking Across,” a conversation with feminist then-graduate student Elizabeth Francis,² Gallop speaks abstractly (during their conversation about generational conflict in the feminist academy, neither she nor Francis explicitly mention the scandal—as if an analysis of the case bears no relation to their topic) about the women students, self-identified feminists, whom she names with the category of the “terrorist graduate student” (Gallop and Francis 1997, 118). In *Feminist Accused*, the “terror” constitutive of Gallop’s graduate students’ “terrorism” is of a Gothic variety: by taking what she has given them and using it to turn against her, the fruits of Gallop’s labour—her feminist women students and their use of the feminist discourse of sexual harassment—have become, in Gallop’s narrative, quite monstrous.

Structuring Gallop’s encounters with her graduate students and her telling of the tale are the defenses which, as Miglena Nikolchina (2004) argues, particularly plague the feminist intellectual community: “merginality” and “abjectivity” (see, for example, 9). The passionate kiss between Gallop and her student represents the fantasy of merginality: it functions as what Julia Kristeva (1980) calls a moment of symbiosis. In this moment, the mother and the daughter are one; they have not yet arrived at the need to recognize each other’s otherness. When Gallop reads her student’s work and declares it unsatisfactory, this is the interruption of language—the paternal function—into the symbiosis between mother and daughter and it is a rude awakening indeed. Although it is arguably the kiss that renders *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* so sensational, the literal kiss is beside the point. What makes this story so familiar and unsettling is that there need not be a kiss at all. Rather, what the story stirs inside the reader is the infantile fantasy—one that repeats through subsequent relationships with people and with texts—that mother and daughter are of one body and mind; that my needs and her needs, my desires and her desires, are merged, the same. And, as in the events described in *Feminist Accused*, one cannot sustain this liminal state of sym-

biosis: eventually a woman “must tear herself from the daughter-mother symbiosis, renounce the undifferentiated community of women and recognize the father at the same time as the symbolic” (Kristeva 1980, 279). This tearing is painful for both mother and daughter, each of whom might seek shelter in the defense of abjectivity: actually, we are nothing alike; we have nothing to learn from or with the other. In the case of this particular story, the pain that the students cannot tolerate is that Gallop has desires beyond them: she wants their work to be something that it is not. And the pain that Gallop cannot tolerate—a pain that is tantamount to a violent betrayal—is that her students have developed minds of their own and relationships to language that exclude her.

“Good luck with the diss...”

Neither I nor my intellectual work can escape the dilemma I describe. Through the act of my analysis, I risk becoming another of Gallop’s “terrorist graduate [students]” (Gallop and Francis 1997, 118). Just as Gallop’s students took what she gave them and used it to terrorize her in the case described in *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, here I am doing the same. Although I certainly repeat on Gallop’s work the aggression her students displayed toward her, I also repeat Gallop’s violence toward her students who explicitly requested that her use of the case as an object of intellectual inquiry be regarded as an aggressive retaliation for their accusations against her. In identifying with and repudiating the mother as a way to structure and develop a mind of my own, the boundaries of the self become slippery indeed.

One complexity of my identifications, which informs my capacity to interpret, analyse, and write about *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, is that my copy of the memoir literally bears the trace of Jane Gallop herself. Early in the same academic term when I would begin drafting my analysis of *Feminist Accused*, I had occasion to meet Gallop in the context of a graduate seminar at the university where I studied. Gallop’s visit and the seminar had been organized by two women professors—one of whom supervised my doctoral research—in the Faculty of Education whose work, and whose opinions of my work, I care intensely about. The seminar offered me and several other graduate students the opportunity to talk to Gallop about her recent book

The Deaths of the Author (2011). At the conclusion of the seminar, many of us asked Gallop to sign our copies of her new book. I had brought along my copy of *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* and asked her to sign it too because—and as I told her—it is a book that is important to me and my work. Gallop graciously agreed and thrilled me by inscribing a little message along with her signature. “For Mary,” she wrote, “Good luck with the diss...”

I felt (and feel) very proud of the inscription. Gallop knew that I was writing about *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* in my dissertation—I had told her this news when I met her two days before the seminar and she seemed to have held it in her mind since then—and her well-wishes felt at once like permission and encouragement. But, a few months later when I began writing the analysis of *Feminist Accused* that had been percolating in my mind since I had reread the memoir just before Gallop’s visit, her kind inscription began to take on new layers of meaning which haunted me, inhibiting and inhabiting my writing. Gallop’s (2011) own methodological practice of closely scrutinizing the meanings of words that stand out to us in our reading encourages me to attend to these layers.

I grew up in the 1990s, the very period of the memoir boom and of the events described in Gallop’s memoir: how interesting that, in my work of seeking the emotional significance of a history of mother-daughter dynamics for women’s intellectual work, I turn to books that were published when I was an adolescent. Having been a teenager in the 90s, I cannot hear the short form for “dissertation”—“diss”—without always also hearing the gleefully taunting short form for “disrespect”—“diss!”—which was a popular saying then. As I began to apply my analysis of the significance of the mother’s difference to Gallop’s memoir, this old, if not entirely forgotten, taunt resurfaced in my mind. “Good luck with the diss...” she wrote. What could those ellipses possibly contain?

The ellipses serve a function for the development of my analysis because, in conjunction with the laden word “diss,” they render Gallop’s well wishes complex and ambivalent. Contained within the ellipses is my own implication in the dilemma that the mother’s otherness poses for the academic woman. Regardless of Gallop’s intentions when she wrote the inscription, my interpretation of it—full as it is of pleasure and guilt—

reifies the way that the dilemma structures my reading of and writing about Gallop’s work. Just as her students’ use of sexual harassment policy depended on the efforts that Gallop and others invested in creating and implementing such policy, so my academic work depends on using the labour of my intellectual mothers in ways which might treat with disrespect their original intentions for or visions of their work. To forge my own intellectual life, I must take what my forebears have given me and use it to make something new, something that is about expanding the possibilities of *my* world, regardless of the kind of interpretive carnage I must leave in my wake. To have found and made any kind of home for myself in the academy, I have needed to rely on the work of women thinkers who have gone before me. And yet, I am entangled in the very problem that is my object of inquiry here: the dissertation as violent act of disrespect.

Arguing that conflict is a necessary and desirable component of learning, not least because it keeps our thinking moving by demarcating intellectual generations, Jen Gilbert (2009) draws on Alice Pitt and Madeleine Grumet to argue that “the phantastical killing and survival of the mother is both an obstacle to and the precondition for entering symbolization” (67). Gilbert emphasizes the paradoxical survival of the destroyed mother: her capacity to survive is yet one more debt that we owe her. She asks: “Can parents survive their child’s adventures in reading?” and goes on to answer that, although “one may have to destroy one’s mother...she in turn will have to survive this destruction, in order that we may think through and with her” (67, 70). The inscription: “For Mary, Good luck with the diss...” functions for me as Gallop’s acknowledgment of my need to destroy her and as her resilient survival. The language of the inscription contains my necessary destruction and the work of reparation—Gallop’s and mine. It holds my reparative act insofar as my writing about Gallop’s work, while certainly a tearing-to-shreds, is also already an attempt to put-back-together-again; writing about Gallop’s texts conveys my indebtedness for the deeply meaningful role those texts have played in my intellectual development. The inscription functions as Gallop’s reparative act insofar as I stand in for those earlier graduate students and their disrespect; by giving me permission and encouragement to use her work to make my way in the academic world, she can, in the deferred

and transference time and space of thinking, offer her student accusers the same. The inscription's few words convey conflict, aggression, loss, permission, and forgiveness. And in those ellipses lies the interminability of the dilemma.

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Endnotes

¹ Making a different, but related, claim about the problem with asserting the students' passivity, commentators such as Joanne Boucher (1998) and Michelle Miller (2011) have argued against critics' insistence on the students' powerlessness, passivity, and victimhood. These authors agree with Gallop's own contention that this view of students renders them incapable of claiming their own sexual subjectivity—or even incapable of having an experience of desire, pleasure, or power—in a sexual(ized) encounter.

² Francis, though a graduate student during their conversation, is not Gallop's student. She is the wife of Gallop's male advisee to whom Gallop dedicates *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, published in the same year as "Talking Across" (Gallop and Francis 1997; Franklin 2009).

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